

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

CLAIMS

- 1 1. (Original) A cryogenic gas delivery apparatus, comprising:
2 a chamber adapted to contain a cryogenic liquid and corresponding gas, the liquid
3 at a temperature below that of the ambient, the gas at a pressure above that of the ambient;
4 at least one heat-conductive probe with a first portion exposed to the ambient, so
5 that the probe introduces thermal energy from the ambient into the chamber; and
6 a passage in communication with the gas in the chamber to receive the gas from
7 the chamber for delivery to the user;
8 wherein the probe is mounted to move relative to the chamber in response to
9 variations in the pressure of the gas, thereby varying the amount of the thermal energy
10 introduced into the chamber.
- 1 2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:
2 a delivery system configured to deliver the gas over time to the user, the delivery
3 system in communication with the passage to receive the gas from the chamber.
- 1 3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the delivery system comprises a pneumatic
2 conserver, the conserver having a sensing system adapted to discharge the gas in response to
3 inhalation by the user.
- 1 4. (Original) The apparatus of 3, wherein the conserver further comprises a reservoir
2 charged by the gas exiting the chamber, and wherein the sensing system is operatively connected
3 to the reservoir.
- 1 5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a flow-rate controller in
2 communication with the passage, flow-rate controller having multiple settings for delivering
3 correspondingly different volumes of the gas over time.
- 1 6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a fill system configured to fill the
2 chamber only partially with the liquid.

1 7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the fill system includes a fill tube
2 terminating in an opening approximately in the middle of the chamber, and a fill chuck
3 connected to the opposite end of the fill tube and having a fill chuck valve adapted to connect to
4 a source of the cryogenic liquid;

5 wherein the apparatus further comprises a manifold secured to one end of the
6 chamber, the manifold having been defined so that the fill chuck and the fill tube at least partially
7 extend therethrough, the fill chuck secured relative to the manifold to define an insulated space
8 between the fill chuck and the manifold over substantially all of the length of the fill chuck,
9 whereby the liquid passing through the fill chuck absorbs minimal heat from the manifold.

1 8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the fill system has a trapping mechanism to
2 reduce leakage of the liquid out of the chamber which would otherwise occur during filling of
3 the chamber from approximately 40% to 50% of capacity of the chamber.

1 9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the fill system includes a fill chuck with a
2 first sealed opening adapted to unseal in response to connecting the fill chuck to a base unit for
3 filling, and a second sealed opening adapted to unseal in response to excess pressure of the
4 gaseous oxygen in the chamber.

1 10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a double-wall container, the inner
2 wall of which defines the chamber and the outer wall extends in spaced relation to the inner wall
3 to define an insulating region between the inner wall and the outer wall, the insulating region
4 being substantially evacuated of air to form a vacuum.

1 11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the probe comprises a first probe with the
2 first portion located in the chamber and the second portion located outside the chamber, the
3 apparatus further comprising a second probe secured within the chamber and having a second
4 probe surface opposing the first portion of the first probe to transfer heat from the first probe to
5 the second probe.

1 12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 11, further comprising a sleeve secured to extend into
2 the chamber and sized to slidably receive the first probe therein in opposing relation to the
3 second probe.

1 13. (Currently amended) A portable liquid oxygen system for delivering gaseous oxygen to a
2 user, the system comprising:

3 a container sufficiently insulated from the thermal energy of the ambient to hold
4 oxygen in both the liquid phase and the gas phase inside the container; and

5 a delivery system ~~having~~ adapted to deliver a sustained, breathable supply of
6 oxygen to the user through an inlet for receiving the in communication with oxygen in the
7 container in the gas phase from the container rather than the liquid phase, the delivery system
8 having an outlet for connecting to the user to deliver the gaseous oxygen, and a conserver
9 connected between the inlet and the outlet and operable in response to inhalation to deliver the
10 gas to the ~~use~~ user.

1 14. (Original) The system of claim 13, further comprising a thermo-pneumatic regulator
2 secured to the container to vary the amount of thermal energy transferred to the container in
3 response to variations in the pressure of the gaseous oxygen in the container.

1 15. (Original) The system of claim 14, wherein the container includes an inner wall defining
2 a volume, the inlet of the delivery system located relative to the volume of the container to
3 reduce unintended loss of the liquid phase from the container irrespective of how the user may
4 orient the liquid oxygen system during use thereof.

1 16. (Original) The system of claim 13, further comprising a fill system configured to fill the
2 container only partially with oxygen in the liquid phase, thereby defining a liquid oxygen volume
3 and a headspace of pressurized oxygen gas in the container.

1 17. (Original) The system of claim 16 wherein the inlet includes a sleeve extending into the
2 container and ending at an opening in the container, the opening spaced from the inner wall of
3 the container and positioned approximately in the middle of the container, whereby the opening
4 of the inlet cannot be located in the volume of oxygen in the liquid phase, irrespective of the
5 orientation of the container.

1 18. (Original) The system of claim 14, wherein the regulator comprises a heat-conductive,
2 elongated member having a first portion located in the container and exposed to the temperature

3 therein and a second portion connected to the first portion and exposed to the ambient
4 temperature.

1 19. (Original) The system of claim 18, wherein the elongated member includes an inner
2 surface exposed to the pressure of the container and mounted to move in a first direction when
3 the pressure exceeds an upper threshold, the regulator adapted to transfer less thermal energy to
4 the container in response to the movement of the elongated member in the first direction.

1 20. (Original) The system of claim 19, wherein the regulator further includes a biasing
2 mechanism to move the inner surface in a second direction when the pressure falls below a lower
3 threshold, the regulator adapted to transfer more thermal energy to the container in response to
4 movement of the elongated member in the second direction.

1 21. (Original) A portable, liquid oxygen system for delivering oxygen gas to a user, the
2 system comprising:

3 a container sufficiently insulated from the ambient to hold oxygen in the form of
4 both liquid oxygen and oxygen gas, the container characterized by a range of evaporation rates at
5 which the liquid oxygen is evaporated within the container to become the oxygen gas;

6 a fill system configured to fill the container only partially with the liquid oxygen to
7 define a volume of liquid oxygen therein and a volume of pressurized oxygen gas therein;

8 a delivery system having an inlet connected to the volume of oxygen gas for
9 receiving the oxygen gas from the container, and an outlet for connecting to the user to deliver
10 the oxygen gas;

11 a thermo-pneumatic regulator adapted to detect variations in the pressure of the
12 volume of the oxygen gas, and to increase the evaporation rate in response to the detection of a
13 predetermined drop in pressure of the volume of the oxygen gas, and to decrease the evaporation
14 rate in response to the detection of a predetermined increase in pressure of the volume of the
15 oxygen gas, whereby the regulator regulates the pressure of the volume of the oxygen gas to
16 remain within a selected baseline pressure range;

17 wherein the regulator is adapted to charge the delivery system with the oxygen
18 gas in sufficient amounts to fulfill the user's breathing needs as the liquid oxygen is evaporated
19 within the container.

1 22. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21,

2 wherein the apparatus is substantially cylindrical and has opposite ends, the
3 apparatus having a base defined at one of the ends and a head defined at the other of the ends;

4 wherein the container has a top, a bottom, and a longitudinal axis extending
5 between the top and the bottom, the head being secured to the top of the container, the container
6 having a neck located in the top, the neck defining a passage between the head and the container,
7 the inlet of the delivery system including a sleeve extending longitudinally from the neck into the
8 container and positioned approximately in the middle of the container;

9 wherein the fill system comprises a fill chuck and a fill tube, the fill chuck
10 secured to the head and extending outwardly from the longitudinal axis, the fill tube having one
11 end secured to the fill chuck extending longitudinally into the container through the sleeve;

12 wherein the fill system further includes a vent-to-fill valve operatively connected
13 to the fill chuck, the delivery system further including a flow-rate controller and a conserver
14 located between the inlet and the outlet for delivering a selected amount of the gas over time, the
15 outlet terminating in a nozzle adapted to connect to a gas line for the user to breathe through;

16 wherein the head includes a circumferential sidewall;

17 wherein the flow-rate controller, the vent-to-fill valve, the fill chuck, and the
18 nozzle are secured to the head at respective angular locations and are located to be accessible by
19 the user from the circumferential sidewall.

1 23. (Original) The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the regulator includes at least one probe
2 extending at least partially into the container, the probe being slidably received in the neck of the
3 container.

1 24. (Original) The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the head includes a manifold positioned
2 adjacent to the container along the longitudinally axis, and further comprising a conserver
3 positioned longitudinally adjacent to the manifold.

1 25. (Original) The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the manifold has an inner manifold wall
2 defining a manifold chamber, the manifold chamber in communication with the volume of
3 pressurized oxygen gas and with the regulator.

1 26. (Original) A regulator for a cryogenic gas delivery apparatus, the apparatus containing
2 the liquid at a temperature below a higher, ambient temperature, and the gaseous phase being
3 above ambient pressure, the regulator comprising:

4 at least one probe having first and second portions, the first portion being
5 positioned relative to the volume of the gas to expose the first portion to the pressure and
6 temperature of the volume of gas, the second portion being located to be exposed to the higher,
7 ambient temperature to conduct heat from the ambient to the volume;

8 wherein the first portion is configured to increase the conduct of heat to the
9 volume of liquid in response to the first portion being exposed to a decreasing pressure of the
10 volume of gas and to decrease the conduct of heat to the volume of gas in response to the first
11 portion being exposed to an increase in the pressure of the volume of gas.

1 27. (Original) The regulator of claim 26, wherein the probe comprises an elongated member
2 having a head portion and an end portion, the head portion having inner and outer surfaces, the
3 inner surface exposed to the pressure of the volume of the gas, the pressure on the inner surface
4 biasing the elongated member away from the volume of gas, the outer surface exposed to the
5 temperature of the ambient, the end portion having a surface extending into the volume of the
6 gas; and a biasing mechanism to bias the elongated member toward the volume of the gas,
7 whereby the amount of heat transferred to the volume of gas varies depending on the location of
8 the elongated member relative to the volume of the gas.

1 28. (Original) The regulator of claim 26, further comprising a passage through which gas in
2 the gaseous phase may flow from the volume of the gas and past the first portion of the probe for
3 delivery of the gas in the gaseous phase.

1 29. (Original) The regulator of claim 26, further comprising a seal disposed between the first
2 and second portions of the probe, the seal having a first side exposed to ambient pressure and a
3 second side exposed to the pressure of the volume of the gas, the seal engaging the probe
4 sufficiently to maintain the ambient pressure and the higher pressure of the volume on respective
5 sides of the seal.

1 30. (Currently amended) A method of charging a portable liquid oxygen system, comprising
2 the steps of:

3 providing an insulated container with a vent for discharging excess oxygen and a
4 passage in communication with the vent, the passage having an opening at a location spaced
5 from the inner wall of the container;

6 initiating the filling of the container with oxygen from a supply of liquid oxygen
7 under pressure by connecting the container to the supply;

8 continuing the filling process to fill the volume available in the container only
9 partially with liquid oxygen, the filling process continuing until the volume of the liquid oxygen
10 in the container reaches a level high enough so that the liquid oxygen enters the opening of the
11 passage and exits the vent in a fashion discernable to the user charging the system; and

12 disconnecting the container from the supply once the liquid oxygen is discerned to
13 be exiting from the vent, whereby the container is charged with the partial amount of the liquid
14 oxygen resulting from the filling process.

1 31. (Original) The method of claim 30, wherein the opening is substantially in the middle of
2 the volume defined by the insulated container, and further comprising the step of continuing the
3 filling process until the volume of the container is about 50% filled with the liquid oxygen.

1 32. (Original) The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of introducing thermal
2 energy from the ambient into the container by means of a thermally conductive path, the path
3 exposed on one end to the temperature of the ambient and on another end to the volume defined
4 by the insulated container, the introduction of thermal energy being sufficient to increase the
5 pressure within the insulated container to an operational, baseline pressure.

1 33. (Original) The method of claim 32, wherein the insulated container has a given
2 evaporation rate when the system is charged, and further comprising the step of introducing
3 thermal energy into the insulated container before the system is charged to create an evaporation
4 rate higher than the given evaporation rate, and thereby shorten the time to charge the system.

1 34. (Currently amended) A method of dispensing oxygen gas from a liquid oxygen system,
2 comprising the steps of:
3 providing an insulated container with a chamber adapted to be only partly filled
4 with oxygen in the liquid phase, thereby creating a liquid oxygen volume and a volume of
5 oxygen gas in the chamber;
6 maintaining the volume of the oxygen gas at pressures above ambient;
7 dispensing a sustained, breathable supply of the oxygen gas to a recipient through
8 a passage in communication with the volume of the oxygen gas;
9 wherein the step of dispensing the oxygen including receiving the oxygen gas
10 through the passage irrespective of the orientation of the chamber.

1 35. (Original) The method of claim 34, wherein the dispensing step including not receiving in
2 the passage any dispensable amounts of the oxygen in the liquid phase, no matter how the
3 container may be turned during use.

1 36. (Original) The method of claim 34, wherein the dispensing step further includes depleting
2 the liquid oxygen in the container at rates substantially independent of the orientation of the
3 container.

1 37. (Original) The method at claim 34, further comprising the step of introducing thermal
2 energy into the insulated container through a heat conductive path between the ambient and the
3 chamber.

1 38. (Original) The method of claim 37, wherein the step of introducing thermal energy
2 further includes increasing the evaporation rate in response to a decrease in the pressure of the
3 volume of gas and decreasing the evaporation rate in response to an increase in the pressure of
4 the volume of gas.

1 39. (Original) The method of claim 38, further comprising the steps of exposing more of the
2 heat-conductive path to the inside of the chamber to increase the evaporation rate and exposing
3 less of the heat-conductive path to the inside of the chamber to decrease the evaporation rate.

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1 40. (New) A portable liquid oxygen system for delivering gaseous oxygen to a user, the
2 system comprising:

3 a container sufficiently insulated from the thermal energy of the ambient to hold
4 oxygen in both the liquid phase and the gas phase inside the container;

5 a delivery system having an inlet for receiving the oxygen in the gas phase from
6 the container, an outlet for connecting to the user to deliver the gaseous oxygen, and a conserver
7 connected between the inlet and the outlet and operable in response to inhalation to deliver the
8 gas to the user; and

9 a thermo-pneumatic regulator secured to the container to vary the amount of
10 thermal energy transferred to the container in response to variations in the pressure of the
11 gaseous oxygen in the container.

1 41. (New) The system of claim 40, wherein the container includes an inner wall defining a
2 volume, the inlet of the delivery system located relative to the volume of the container to reduce
3 unintended loss of the liquid phase from the container irrespective of how the user may orient the
4 liquid oxygen system during use thereof.

1 42. (New) The system of claim 40, wherein the regulator comprises a heat-conductive,
2 elongated member having a first portion located in the container and exposed to the temperature
3 therein and a second portion connected to the first portion and exposed to the ambient
4 temperature.

1 43. (New) The system of claim 42, wherein the elongated member includes an inner surface
2 exposed to the pressure of the container and mounted to move in a first direction when the
3 pressure exceeds an upper threshold, the regulator adapted to transfer less thermal energy to the
4 container in response to the movement of the elongated member in the first direction.

1 44. (New) The system of claim 43, wherein the regulator further includes a biasing
2 mechanism to move the inner surface in a second direction when the pressure falls below a lower
3 threshold, the regulator adapted to transfer more thermal energy to the container in response to
4 movement of the elongated member in the second direction.

1 45. (New) A method of charging a liquid oxygen system, comprising the steps of:
2 providing an insulated container with a vent for discharging excess oxygen and a
3 passage in communication with the vent, the passage having an opening at a location spaced
4 from the inner wall of the container;
5 initiating the filling of the container with oxygen from a supply of liquid oxygen
6 under pressure by connecting the container to the supply;
7 continuing the filling process to fill the volume available in the container only
8 partially with liquid oxygen, the filling process continuing until the volume of the liquid oxygen
9 in the container reaches a level high enough so that the liquid oxygen enters the opening of the
10 passage and exits the vent in a fashion discernable to the user charging the system; and
11 disconnecting the container from the supply once the liquid oxygen is discerned to
12 be exiting from the vent, whereby the container is charged with the partial amount of the liquid
13 oxygen resulting from the filling process;
14 wherein the opening is substantially in the middle of the volume defined by the
15 insulated container, and further comprising the step of continuing the filling process until the
16 volume of the container is about 50% filled with the liquid oxygen.

1 46. (New) A method of charging a portable liquid oxygen system, comprising the steps of:
2 providing an insulated container with a vent for discharging excess oxygen and a
3 passage in communication with the vent, the passage having an opening at a location spaced
4 from the inner wall of the container;
5 initiating the filling of the container with oxygen from a supply of liquid oxygen
6 under pressure by connecting the container to the supply;
7 continuing the filling process to fill the volume available in the container only
8 partially with liquid oxygen, the filling process continuing until the volume of the liquid oxygen
9 in the container reaches a level high enough so that the liquid oxygen enters the opening of the
10 passage and exits the vent in a fashion discernable to the user charging the system;
11 disconnecting the container from the supply once the liquid oxygen is discerned to
12 be exiting from the vent, whereby the container is charged with the partial amount of the liquid
13 oxygen resulting from the filling process; and

14 introducing thermal energy from the ambient into the container by means of a
15 thermally conductive path, the path exposed on one end to the temperature of the ambient and on
16 another end to the volume defined by the insulated container, the introduction of thermal energy
17 being sufficient to increase the pressure within the insulated container to an operational, baseline
18 pressure.

1 47. (New) The method of claim 46, wherein the insulated container has a given evaporation
2 rate when the system is charged, and further comprising the step of introducing thermal energy
3 into the insulated container before the system is charged to create an evaporation rate higher than
4 the given evaporation rate, and thereby shorten the time to charge the system.

1 48. (New) A method of dispensing oxygen gas from a liquid oxygen system, comprising the
2 steps of:

3 providing an insulated container with a chamber adapted to be only partly filled
4 with oxygen in the liquid phase, thereby creating a liquid oxygen volume and a volume of
5 oxygen gas in the chamber;

6 maintaining the volume of the oxygen gas at pressures above ambient;
7 dispensing a sustained, breathable supply of the oxygen gas to a recipient through
8 a passage in communication with the volume of the oxygen gas;

9 wherein the step of dispensing the oxygen including receiving the oxygen gas
10 through the passage irrespective of the orientation of the chamber;

11 introducing thermal energy into the insulated container through a heat conductive
12 path between the ambient and the chamber, wherein the step of introducing thermal energy
13 further includes increasing the evaporation rate in response to a decrease in the pressure of the
14 volume of gas and decreasing the evaporation rate in response to an increase in the pressure of
15 the volume of gas.

1 49. (New) The method of claim 48, further comprising the steps of exposing more of the
2 heat-conductive path to the inside of the chamber to increase the evaporation rate and exposing
3 less of the heat-conductive path to the inside of the chamber to decrease the evaporation rate.